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KA 1273 PCT/US
June 27, 2006

AN APPARATUS FOR THE ACTUATION OF AT LEAST ONE
PIVOTABLE EXTERNAL ELEMENT OF A VEHICLE

The invention relates to an apparatus for the actuation of at least one external element of a
5 vehicle, in particular of a soft top element of a convertible vehicle, of the type defined in
more detail in the preamble of claim 1.

The actuation of automatically pivotable external elements of a vehicle, which in
particular represent top elements of a convertible vehicle and tailgate or trunk covers, but
10 which can also be made as other external parts of a vehicle such as a gas tank cover or a
door element, typically takes place in practice by fluid drives in the form of hydraulic
cylinders which are hinged at one end to the vehicle body and at the other end to the
external elements of the vehicle to be pivoted.

15 In addition to the disadvantages typically inherent in hydraulic systems with respect to the
temperature behavior and to the servicing effort as well as to the typically high
construction space requirements, in particular the limited flexibility with respect to the
design of the path of movement of the external element of the vehicle is disadvantageous
on the use of a hydraulic drive for the pivoting of an external element of a vehicle.

20 It is known of convertible vehicles from practice that a top or a top storage well cover is
moved via an electrical drive. In this connection, linear drives are used which are
designed as replacements for a hydraulic control for the corresponding use, with the linear
motion generated by an electric motor being transmitted to the at least one pivotable
25 external element of the vehicle via a suitable multi-joint mechanism. Such a drive of a
pivotable external element of a vehicle is thus likewise complex.

The aforesaid disadvantages have a particularly serious effect on the actuation of a plurality of pivotable external elements of a vehicle such as are represented, for example, by the top elements of a convertible vehicle. With convertible vehicles whose top is stored in a folded or folded together manner, and usually in a storage well in the rear sector of the vehicle, in the open state, there is the problem of realizing a top movement between its end positions with a top which is as light as possible and with simple kinematics, with a sufficient height having to be taken into account with respect to the head area of vehicle occupants, on the one hand, and with a height having to be taken into account which is as low as possible with respect to possible spatial boundaries such as a garage roof, on the other hand, in the design of the paths of movement of the cover.

The roof elements of a top are typically driven for this purpose via a top linkage which is connected to a body via a main bearing and establishes a transmission of force, hydraulically via joints as a rule, from the drive motor up to a front end of the top.

Although the movement sequences for a clamp, a top storage well cover and the top mechanism can be designed separately per se, a compulsory control via the hydraulic drive is usually provided in the top mechanism, so that the individual joints of the top linkage cannot be controlled separately.

The German patent specification DE 198 47 983 C1 describes a multi-part, lowerable vehicle top which provides the possibility of controlling a plurality of top elements independently of one another. For this purpose, a multipart, lowerable vehicle top having at least two flexurally rigid top elements, which are pivotally connected to one another and are pivotally connected to the vehicle body via at least one top element, are designed such that hinge joints are provided for the connection of the at least two flexurally rigid

top elements to one another and to the vehicle body, with at least one of the hinge joints per connection being able to be driven by means of a fluid drive.

In this known solution, a conventional transmission linkage is replaced by a complex
5 mechanism having a plurality of hydraulic drives. In addition to the required construction effort and to the requirement of a separate hydraulic pump for each hinge point to be able to control different hinge points with independent volume flows and to a correspondingly high weight of the top, the speed of the top movement is restricted by the disadvantages of a hydraulic drive inherent in the system, which include the high temperature
10 dependency, the restrictions in the speed regulation due to the comparatively low stiffness of hydraulic systems and their dead times as well as a poor efficiency.

It is therefore the object of the present invention to provide an apparatus for the actuation of at least one pivotable external element of a vehicle, in particular of a top element of a
15 convertible vehicle, of the type initially described in more detail which is improved with regard to a simple, flexibly designed and faster movement sequence in the pivoting of the at least one external element of a vehicle, to a simpler design and to a lower weight.

This object is solved in accordance with the invention by the features contained in the
20 characterizing portion of claim 1.

If an apparatus for the actuation of a plurality of pivotal external elements of a vehicle, which are top elements of a top for a convertible vehicle and comprise at least foldable roof elements, with at least one pivot joint and drive being provided for the pivoting of
25 the top elements with respect to one another and with respect to the vehicle body, is designed in accordance with the invention such that an electric motor is provided as the drive for pivot joints of connections between the top elements with respect to one

another, said electric motor introducing a drive torque directly into a pivot joint, with in each case at least one pivot joint of different connections being controllable separately, this has the advantage that a much faster movement sequence can be realized due to the avoidance of system-caused dead times of a hydraulic drive and its lower stiffness.

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Any desired flexible paths of movement can advantageously be realized by the use of drivable pivot joints which can be used as supporting pivot joints. Paths of movement can be realized with a drive in accordance with the invention which both satisfy the demands for sufficient headroom for passengers, e.g. in the back, and provide a protection against
10 damage by an adjustable distance with respect to a height obstacle such as a garage ceiling.

The possibility is furthermore of advantage in a design in accordance with the invention of a drive for a pivotable external element of a vehicle of making available comfort
15 functions such as an automatic unit adapted to the spatial environmental conditions, optionally determined via a suitable sensor system, and by means of which a top automatically closes or opens under predefined environmental conditions or events such as rain.

20 For instance, the top movement can be ideally adapted to the available headroom, for example, by a distance sensor system and associated control modes stored in the central electrical control unit.

Furthermore, the actuation of the at least one pivotable external element of a vehicle is
25 possible via a remote control, which - with respect to a top - includes the folding open of only one front roof element and thus the creation of a targa-like open top.

The provision of an electric motor as the drive for the at least one pivot joint furthermore has the advantage that, using the motor current of the associated joint drive, a simple possibility of a jamming recognition is provided, with a top stop or a reversible top movement being able to be initiated for a top with a low reaction time and thus a high
5 jamming protection being able to be realized. Furthermore, a simplified location of the problem area is possible in this manner.

Furthermore, possibilities of an emergency actuation or of a self-locking can also be provided.

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Electric motors represent cost-favorable, simple and compact components which can be designed with low construction space requirements with the required motor forces and which can be used universally for different pivot joints and different pivotable external elements of a vehicle or sub-assemblies thereof.

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Furthermore, they provide all the possibilities for the control and regulation of the drives corresponding to the desired independent movements of the hinge points or pivot joints independently of the ambient temperatures, they are low in noise and they have a low maintenance requirement.

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In an advantageous embodiment, an electric motor is associated with each connection of the top elements to one another or to the vehicle body via a pivot axle. In this manner, the highest flexibility can be realized with respect to an independent movement of the individual top elements.

25

In embodiments differing from this, it is, however, also conceivable that an electric motor is not associated with each pivot axle, but that one drive is used for more than one pivot

axle. In practice, pivot axles, in particular pivot axles with an almost synchronous movement sequence, can be coupled in a simple manner, with a splitting of the drive of an electric motor to two or more rotating shafts being conceivable, or a compulsory guiding of one of the pivot axles.

5

If one electric motor is associated with a plurality of pivot axles, substantial cost advantages and a clear reduction in the construction space requirements can be achieved.

10 In a further aspect of the invention, provision can be made for a connection of the top elements to one another or to the vehicle body to be formed by at least one controllable pivot joint and at least one passive pivot joint, with the associated pivot axle of the connection being a pivot axle of a passive pivot joint. When active pivot joints, which represent a direct driven connection between two parts, and passive pivot joints, which can e.g. be formed by one rivet connection and only form one pivot axle, are used, a
15 connection between two top elements or between a top element and the vehicle body can be designed such that the active pivot joint does not engage directly at the pivot axle of the connection, but rather effects the rotation hereat, for example, by means of an auxiliary lever, such that the active pivot joint only has to withstand the required torque and not the further forces occurring at the pivot point of the connection. The active pivot
20 joint in an aspect of this type thus forms a drive for a passive pivot joint forming the actual pivot axle of the connection.

Provision can be made with respect to the control of a pivotable external element of a vehicle or of a top element for a plurality of electric motors to be connected to a central
25 electrical control unit.

Differing from this or complementary to this, at least some of the electric motors used can, however, each have their own control unit which is in each case connected to at least one further control unit for at least one electric motor by a data bus, e.g. a CAN bus of an onboard network of the vehicle.

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A number of alternatives are possible with regard to the arrangement of the electric motors, with the electric motors being able to be arranged centrally on the longitudinal axis of the vehicle or decentralized with respect to the longitudinal axis of the vehicle with external elements of a vehicle pivotable in the longitudinal direction of the vehicle depending on the package design.

10

Depending on the arrangement of the electric motors, the shafts which lead from the electric motors to pairs of pivot joints and which are preferably flexible, are to be designed with regard to their torsion resistance such that different lengths from the electric motor to the pivot joint have no effect on the synchronization of pivot joints oppositely arranged.

15

The apparatus in accordance with the invention is also particularly advantageous when the external element of a vehicle to be pivoted is a cover element which can be raised from a closed position at least at one edge by pivoting by means of at least one drivable pivot joint and at least one associated drive around an oppositely disposed edge. Cover elements of this type such as represent a trunk lid or a top rear storage well cover or a rear cover of the vehicle combining these two functions.

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It is frequently wished to design a pivot joint which serves for the fixing of the cover element to the vehicle body at the edge associated with the pivot axle of the cover element in as space-saving a manner as possible. It is particularly advantageous in this

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respect for the at least one drivable pivot joint to engage at a linkage which, at one end, is hingedly fixed to the vehicle body and which, at the other end, is hingedly fixed to a region of the cover element disposed spaced apart from a pivot axle of the cover element in the longitudinal direction of the vehicle.

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In this manner, the at least one drivable pivot joint is moved out of the region of the hinged connection to the vehicle body such that it can be designed with the lowest construction space requirements, for example with a swan neck bearing.

10 The region of the hinged connection can also be made as a water passage due to the spatial distance of the at least one drivable pivot bearing from the passive hinged connection of the cover element to the vehicle body without additional measures having to be taken as a result for the protection of electrical components against moisture.

15 Provision can furthermore be made for the linkage to be formed with the at least one active pivot joint from two mutually connected levers which are of different length, with the cover element being latchable in its closed position by pivoting of the linkage into an over-center position. With such a pivoting capability of the linkage, a locking possibility is created without any additional latching means since the cover element can no longer be
20 opened in the over-center position.

Further advantages and advantageous aspects of the subject matter of the invention can be seen from the description, the drawing and the claims.

25 A plurality of embodiments of an apparatus in accordance with the invention are shown in schematically simplified form in the drawing and will be explained in more detail in the following description.

There are shown:

- Fig. 1
5 a simplified, three-dimensional view of a top for a convertible vehicle, shown alone, with the top being in the closed position;
- Fig. 2
10 a simplified plan view of an electric motor and two pivot joints of a roof element of the top in accordance with Fig. 1 in active connection therewith;
- Fig. 3
a simplified, partially sectioned side view of a pivot joint of Fig. 1 and Fig. 2;
- 15 Fig. 4 a further partially sectioned side view of the pivot joint of Fig. 3;
- Fig. 5
20 a section through the pivot joint of Fig. 3 and Fig. 4 along a line A-A in Fig. 3;
- Fig. 6
a section through the pivot joint of Fig. 3 and Fig. 4 along a line B-B in Fig. 4;
- Fig. 7
25 a simplified three-dimensional representation of a connection of a clip of the top of Fig. 1, shown alone;

- Figs.8.1 to 8 .11 in each case a schematic positional sketch of the roof elements of the top of Fig. 1 during a first movement sequence for the top opening;
- 5 Figs. 9.1 to 9.13 in each case a schematic positional sketch of the roof elements of the top of Fig. 1 during a second movement sequence for the top opening;
- 10 Figs. 10.1 to 10.12 in each case a schematic positional sketch of the roof elements of the top of Fig. 1 during a third movement sequence for the top opening;
- 15 Figs. 11.1 to 11.5 in each case a schematic positional sketch of the roof elements of the top of Fig. 1 during a fourth movement sequence for the top opening; and
- 20 Figs. 12.1 to 12.3 in each case a schematic positional sketch of a top storage well cover during a movement sequence between an open position of the top storage well cover and a locked closed position.

In the embodiments of an apparatus in accordance with the invention described in the following, said apparatus serves the actuation of a pivotable external element of a vehicle which is here made in each case as a top element of a top element of a top 1 of a convertible vehicle 2.

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In Fig. 1, the top 1 for the convertible vehicle 2 which is designated overall as 2 and is shown in more detail in Figs. 11.1 to 11.5 and has three foldable roof elements 6, 7, 8 which are bounded by external roof frame section pairs 3, 4, 5 which are oppositely disposed with respect to a longitudinal axis of the vehicle.

5

The top 2 shown in the Figures is in each case a so-called hard-top folding roof having a front roof element 6 which is adjacent to a windshield frame 12 in the closed state, a middle roof element 7 and a rear roof element 8.

10 The following embodiments, however, equally apply to a top having a textile roof skin which is fixedly stretched over bending-resistant, frame-like roof elements since frame-like roof elements of this type correspond to the above-described bending-resistant roof elements 6, 7, 8.

15 As can be seen from Fig. 1, the rear roof element 8 bounding the top 2 at the rear is connected to the vehicle body at a main bearing 9 pivotably at two symmetrically arranged hinge points by means of pivot joints 11A, 11B arranged there.

20 The connection of the roof elements 6, 7, 8 to one another is likewise in each case made by means of pivot joints, with a pair of two pivot joints 13A, 13B being provided at a first pivot axle A1 between the front roof segment 6 and the middle roof segment 7 and a further pair of two pivot joints 14A, 14 arranged symmetrically to the longitudinal axis of the vehicle being provided at a second pivot axle A2 between the middle roof segment 7 and the rear roof segment 8.

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Furthermore, a clamp 15 of the top 2 is pivotably connected to the vehicle body in the region of the main bearing 9 via pairs of pivot joints 10A, 10B, 10C, 10D, 10E and 10F

and a top storage well cover 16, which is arranged at the rear end of the top 2 and covers a stowage space for the top 2 in its opened state, is pivotably connected to the vehicle body via two pivot joints 17A, 17B attached to its end at the rear side, both components representing pivotable external elements of the vehicle.

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In the present case, a separately controllable drive, which is in each case made as an electric motor 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 connected to a central electric control unit, is provided for each pivot axle A1, A2, A3 of the roof elements 6, 7, 8 and for the pivot axle A4 of the clamp 15 and the pivot axle A5 of the top storage well cover 16.

10

The torque of the electric motors 18 to 22 can be introduced in the embodiment of the invention shown into the pivot joints 10A, 10B, 11A, 11B, 13A, 13B, 14A, 14B, 17A, 17B made in the same construction here in each case by means of flexible shafts 23.

15 In the embodiment shown, all the electric motors 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 are connected to a central control unit which controls or regulates the electric motors 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

Fig. 2 shows by way of example in a simplified manner the electric motor 19 which is associated with the pivot joints 14A, 14B between the front roof element 6 and the
20 middle roof element 7 and which, like the other electric motors, is connected by means of flexible shafts 23 in each case to both pivot joints 14A, 14B disposed oppositely with respect to the longitudinal axis of the vehicle.

The electric motors 18 to 22 shown are each made as DC motors and are arranged
25 centrally with respect to the longitudinal axis of the vehicle; however, in an aspect differing from this, a decentralized arrangement of an electric motor and its connection with only one pivot axle is also possible.

The pivot joints 14A, 14B each have a transmission device 24 which is made as a reduction gear and by means of which they are connected to the respective electric motor 19 and are shown in more detail in Fig. 3 to Fig. 6.

5

The transmission device 24 is arranged between a lever or a roof frame part 3 of the front roof element 6 and a lever or roof frame part 4 of the middle roof element 7, with the lever 4 of the middle roof frame part 7 being made in the form of a shell in the region of the transmission device 24 and forming a bearing shell 31 for a sleeve coupling with a shell part 30 arranged between the lever 4 and the lever 3 of the front roof element.

10

As can in particular be seen from Fig. 4 and Fig. 5, the flexible shaft 23 is rotatably connected to a screw 25 of the transmission device 24 supported at the lever 4 of the middle roof element 7. The screw 25 is in engagement with a first gear 26 which is made of plastic for noise reasons in the present case and which is made in staged manner with a first gear stage 26A which is in engagement with the screw 25 and a second gear stage 26B of a smaller diameter. The second gear stage 26B is in engagement with a second gear 27 or a first gear stage 27A of the same whose diameter is larger than the first gear stage 26A of the first gear 26. Both the first gear 26 and the second gear 27 are supported at both ends in the bearing shell 31.

15

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The second gear 27 meshes via a second gear stage 27B, which is smaller than the first gear stage 27A of the second gear 27, but larger than the second gear stage 26B of the first gear 26, with a third gear 28 whose axle forms the first pivot axle A1 and is rotatably fixedly connected to the lever 3 of the front roof part 6.

25

A self-locking of the transmission device 24 is achieved via the design of the pitch of the screw 25 in the embodiment shown. In addition or alternatively, this effect can also be achieved with brakes on the electric motors 18 to 22.

- 5 The roof element 6, 7, or their levers 3, 4, connected by the pivot joints 14A, 14B are rotatable at least approximately by 360° with respect to one another, with an abutment 32 adjustable by means of a regulating screw 33 being provided at the pivot joint 14A or 14B respectively.
- 10 As with the other pivot joints, a position detection sensor 29 is arranged at the pivot joint 14A or 14B respectively for the determination of the position of the top 2 or of its roof elements, with the position detection sensor 29 being made as a potentiometer in this present case.
- 15 The position detection sensor 29 in the embodiment shown is placed in a simple manner onto a striker which is provided coaxially to the respective pivot axle in the transmission device of the respective pivot joint.

- 20 Alternatively to a position recognition by means of a potentiometer, other analog and digital systems can naturally also be used such as incremental transducers, inclination sensors or Hall sensors.

- 25 The connection of the clamp 15 to the vehicle body 9 or to a lever element 34 connected thereto is shown in an enlarged representation on its own in Fig. 7. Unlike the connections of the roof elements 6, 7, 8 to one another and their connection to the vehicle body 9 and the connection of the top storage well cover 16 to the vehicle body 9, not only

directly driven active pivot joints are used here whose pivot axle is also the pivot axle A1, A2, A3, A5 of the associated connection.

5 The connection of the clamp 15 to the vehicle body 9 or to the lever element 34 is made both with active pivot joints 10A, 10B directly driven by the electric motor 21 and with two pairs of passive pivot joints 10C, 10D and 10E, 10F, with the passive pivot joints 10C, 10D, of which the pivot joint 10C can be seen in Fig. 7, forming the pivot axle A4 of the connection.

10 The active pivot joint 10A is secured to the lever element 34 connected to the vehicle body via screw connections 38 in the present case. The torque of the pivot joint 10A is transmitted via an auxiliary lever 39 to a bridging element 41 fixed via connections 40 to the clamp 15, and thus to the clamp 15. With such an aspect of the connection, the driven pivot joint 10A, or the pivot joint 10B forming the mirror image thereof, substantially
15 only has to be designed for the required torque to be transmitted and not for further forces occurring at the hinge point.

20 Deviating from the embodiment shown in Fig. 1, further connections can naturally be designed between the top elements and in particular between the top elements and the vehicle body using active and passive pivot joints in accordance with the embodiment shown in Fig. 7.

25 With reference to Fig. 8.1 to Fig. 8.12, a movement sequence of the top 2 on an opening movement is shown in each case. In this context, Fig. 8.1 to Fig. 8.11 show an opening movement with trajectories such as are typical in conventional hydraulically driven tops.

In Figs. 9.1 to 9.13, in contrast, a much shallower top movement which is possible in accordance with the inventive top is shown in which there is still sufficient headroom in the back of the vehicle for passengers located there.

5 Fig. 10.1 to Fig. 10.12 show a top opening movement with an even lower trajectory such as can be selected with a free rear region and which is optionally also possible during the journey of the vehicle since a very low area exposed to the wind and so a very low drag can be realized with this opening movement.

10 With each of the top movements shown in Fig. 8.1 to Fig. 10.12, the three roof elements 6, 7, 8 can be folded in S-form such that the front roof element 6 is stowed in a folding position with an open top 2 rearwardly pivoted over the middle roof element 7 and the rear roof element 8 which lies below it and is likewise rearwardly pivoted with respect to its position with a closed top 2.

15

On an opening movement of the top 2, the clamp 15 is first raised for the release of an upwardly pivoting movement of the top storage well cover 16 and is lowered again after the putting up of the top storage well cover 16, after which the roof elements 6, 7, 8 are placed on the clamp 15.

20

The opening movement of the top 2 is controlled in each case in this process such that the front roof element 6 is pivoted upwardly and rearwardly around the first pivot axle A1, the middle roof element 7 is pivoted around its rear second pivot axle A2 and the rear roof element 8 is pivoted rearwardly around its rear third pivot axle A3.

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In particular with reference to Fig. 8.1 to Fig. 8.11 representing a control with conventional trajectories of the roof elements 6, 7, 8, it can be seen that the upward and

rear pivoting of the front roof element 6 at the first pivot axle A1 substantially takes place during the pivoting of the middle roof element 7 and of the rear roof element 8, with the rear roof element 8 being folded over rearwardly on a rearward movement of the second pivot axle A1 and the middle roof element 7 only changing its angular position
5 insignificantly during the opening movement is placed on it.

A top movement is shown in Fig. 9.1 to 9.13 which is shallower with respect to the control in Fig. 8.1 to Fig. 8.11 and in which the pivoting or folding of the front roof element 6 around the first pivot axle A1 takes place upwardly and rearwardly essentially
10 before the pivoting of the middle roof element 7 and of the rear roof element 8 in a manner in accordance with Fig. 8.1 to Fig. 8.11.

In Fig. 9.9 and Fig. 9.10 a front seat passenger 35 and a rear passenger 36 are shown in an elementary manner for whom sufficient space is present in the head region during this
15 opening movement of the top 2.

The top opening movement shown in Fig. 10.1 to Fig. 10.12 differs from an opening movement shown in Fig. 9.1 to Fig. 9.13 by much shallower trajectories of the roof elements 6, 7, 8 which are in particular achieved in that the pivoting of the front roof element 6 around the first pivot axle A1 only takes place after a far-going rearward
20 pivoting of the middle roof element 7 and of the rear roof element 8 or of the second pivot axle A1.

A control of this type takes place in the present case in dependence on the spacing
25 determined via a distance recognition sensor system known per se from a height obstacle representing e.g. a garage ceiling 37 in accordance with Fig. 10.6 to Fig. 10.8. Due to the

restricted height in the rear region here, this selection is only permitted if it is determined via a seat occupancy detection that there is no passenger 36 in the rear region.

5 A further advantageous top movement which can be realized with the top 2 in accordance with the invention is shown in Fig. 11.1 to Fig. 11.5.

On this opening movement of the top 2, the middle roof segment 7 is first pivoted around its rear second pivot axle A2 and the rear roof element 8 is pivoted around its rear third pivot axle A3, while the angular position of the front roof element 6 remains essentially
10 the same. In an at least approximately horizontal position of the rear roof element 8 in accordance with Fig. 11.3, the front roof element 6 and the middle roof element 7 are placed down such that the middle roof element 7 is pivoted on the rear roof element 8 and at least approximately parallel thereto and the front roof element 6 is pivoted downwardly in respect to this into an at least approximately vertical position.

15

In this manner, the front roof element 6 can be placed in a space saving manner in the stowed position of the top 2 at least approximately parallel to a back of a rear seat.

The Fig. 12.1 to 12.3 show an alternative drive for the top storage cover 16 in an
20 elementary illustration which can here at the same time be designed as a gate cover. The top storage well cover 16 is thus a cover element which can be raised from a closed position at least at one edge, such as at the edge 16A at the front side of a vehicle, by pivoting by means of drivable pivot joints 42, 43 and by means of an associated drive 22 around an oppositely disposed edge, here the rear edge 16B.

25

The drivable pivot joints 42, 43 here engage at a linkage 46 which is formed from two levers 47, 48, which is hingedly fixed at one end to the vehicle body 9 and is hingedly

fixed at the other end to a region of the top storage well cover 16 disposed spaced from the pivot axle A5 of the top storage well cover 16 in the longitudinal direction of the vehicle.

- 5 In the embodiment shown, the connection of the linkage 46 of the first lever 47 to the vehicle body 9 and the connection of the levers 47 and 48 to one another is in each case formed as a drivable pivot joint 42 or 43 connected to an electric motor via a flexible shaft (not shown in any more detail), whereas the connection of the linkage 46 or of the second lever 48 to the top storage well cover 16 is designed as a passive pivot joint 44 of
10 conventional construction.

Depending on the desired movement sequence and on the geometrical circumstances, it can also be advantageous to design the connection of the linkage 46 to the top storage well cover 16 with a drivable pivot joint.

15

The hinged connection of the top storage well cover 16 in the region of the pivot axle 5 to the rear edge 16B of the top storage well cover 16 is optional and made as a passive pivot joint 45 in the present case.

- 20 In particular with embodiment variants in which a further rear cover or trunk cover adjoins the top storage well cover 16 at the rear side, it is advantageous to design the hinged connection of the top storage well cover 16 in the region of its pivot axle A5 by means of a space-saving so-called swan-neck bearing which is curved between a hinged point and the fastening to the top storage well cover in the longitudinal direction of the
25 vehicle such that it can move out of the way from an adjacent edge of a rear cover at the front side of the vehicle on a pivoting. In this connection, the swan-neck bearing can also be arranged in a water passage.

When the top storage well cover 16 is moved at an open position shown in Fig. 12.1 into a closed position shown in Fig. 12.2, the top storage well cover 16 is lowered by a control of the pivot joint 42 fixedly supported on the vehicle and of the pivot joint 43 connecting the levers 47, 48 of the linkage 46 from an approximately vertical position into an approximately horizontal position, with a latching being able to be made available by a suitable locking element in the closed position shown in Fig. 12.2.

In the present embodiment, the levers 47, 48 of the linkage 46 are made in different lengths, whereby the linkage 46 can be brought into a type of dead center end position or can be moved into an over-center position. In the over-center position of the linkage 46 shown in Fig. 12.3 in which the joint 43 connecting the levers 47, 48 and the lever 48 hingedly connected to the top storage well cover 16 are positioned slightly in front of the pivot joint 43 fixing the linkage 46 to the vehicle body 9 in the direction of the front of the vehicle, a raising of the top storage well cover 16 from outside is not possible so that a latching of the top storage well cover 16 is realized without any further closing elements.

To precisely define the position of the linkage 46 in this latched position, an abutment 49 is provided which the linkage 46 comes into contact with in the latched position.

Alternatively to the over-center position shown in Fig. 12.3, in another embodiment, the abutment 49 can optionally be positioned so that the linkage 46 is located in a dead-center position.

To permit an emergency actuation in the event of a power failure, the drivable pivot joints 42, 43 are designed with respect to their self-locking such that they are manually

adjustable in the deactivated state. The self-locking of the pivot joints 42, 43 is thus defined such that it, on the one hand, permits an adjustment by hand, but, on the other hand, is sufficient to hold the cover element 16 in its end position.

- 5 For the emergency unlatching, the linkage 46, as shown by chain-dotting in Fig. 12.3, can be pivoted rearwardly to release the top storage well cover 16 for a manual opening.

The access possibility can here be realized by a through-hole at the side of the inner side of the vehicle in the embodiment shown or, in an embodiment with an adjacent rear cover
10 and an adjacent trunk at the rear side, at the side of the trunk.

It is understood that, in addition to an emergency unlatching, an emergency latching is also possible with an oppositely directed manual actuation of the linkage 46.

- 15 The drivable pivot joints 42, 43 used in the embodiment in accordance with Figs. 12.1 to 12.3 correspond in the present case to the pivot joints used in the previously described embodiments.

All the drivable pivot joints used in connection with the present invention cannot only be
20 hinge-like swivel-pivot joints shown here, but also any other known joint type such as a ball joint which can in particular be advantageous on a pivoting of an external element of a vehicle in a transverse direction to the vehicle.

REFERENCE NUMERAL LIST

- 1 top
- 2 convertible vehicle
- 5 3 outer roof frame section pair
- 4 outer roof frame section pair
- 5 outer roof frame section pair
- 6 external element of a vehicle, top element, front roof element
- 7 external element of a vehicle, top element, middle roof element
- 10 8 external element of a vehicle, top element, rear roof element
- 9 vehicle body, main bearing
- 10A pivot joint
- 10B pivot joint
- 10C passive pivot joint
- 15 10D passive pivot joint
- 10E passive pivot joint
- 10F passive pivot joint
- 11A pivot joint
- 11B pivot joint
- 20 12 windshield frame
- 13A pivot joint
- 13B pivot joint
- 14A pivot joint
- 14B pivot joint
- 25 15 external element of a vehicle, top element, clamp
- 16 external element of a vehicle, top element, top storage well cover
- 16A edge

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KA 1273 PCT/US
June 27, 2006

- 16B edge
- 17A pivot joint
- 17B pivot joint
- 18 electric motor
- 5 19 electric motor
- 20 electric motor
- 21 electric motor
- 22 electric motor
- 23 flexible shaft
- 10 24 transmission device
- 25 screw
- 26 gear
- 26A gear stage
- 26B gear stage
- 15 27 gear
- 27A gear stage
- 27B gear stage
- 28 gear
- 29 position detection sensor
- 20 30 shell part
- 31 bearing shell
- 32 abutment
- 33 regulating screw
- 34 lever element
- 25 35 front seat passenger
- 36 rear seat passenger
- 37 height obstacle, garage ceiling

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KA 1273 PCT/US
June 27, 2006

- 38 screw connection
- 39 auxiliary lever
- 40 connection
- 41 bridging element
- 5 42 pivot joint
- 43 pivot joint
- 44 pivot joint
- 45 pivot joint
- 46 linkage
- 10 47 lever
- 48 lever
- 49 abutment
- A1 pivot axle
- 15 A2 pivot axle
- A3 pivot axle
- A4 pivot axle
- A5 pivot axle

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